

## COMMON PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED WHEN RENAL PATIENTS ARE ADMITTED TO A GENERAL HOSPITAL.

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**PROBLEM:** With an increasing renal population and scarcity of nephrologists and nurses, renal patients with other illnesses are being cared for in non-nephrology settings. Renal patients have complex health care needs, requiring specialist observation and intervention. Without this, problems are occurring unnecessarily, leading to an inadequate service and inequality in the standards of care given.

**PURPOSE:** To identify the difficulties encountered by general nurses when dealing with renal patients and ascertain the appropriateness of a Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) to assist with the problems/ support required.

**DESIGN:** Qualitative mode of inquiry utilising semi-structured, taped interviews. Burnard's (1991) method of analyzing interview transcripts was used. Invitations to take part in the study were sent to F Grades based on ward's that had a renal patient admitted within the last 2 years. Senior staff were chosen, as they were more aware of team difficulties. 6 senior members of staff (F Grade) were chosen from a variety of wards to broaden the research.

**FINDINGS:** Participants identified poor patient care due to a lack of specialist knowledge and resources, suggesting the need for education and training when caring for renal patients. Communication difficulties were also identified. A number of interviewees highlighted the need for an individual to link the renal team to the wards for patients and staff. Teaching sessions and readily available information were also highlighted, perhaps even a renal care pathway for medics and nurses to refer to. The consensus was that there was a need for specialist advice and support, ideally being a CNS, when caring for renal patients.

**CONCLUSION:** The study has identified that general wards have a need for renal support. How this is to be delivered is still open for debate, although the introduction of a CNS appears to fulfill the criteria suggested by the interviewees. The important conclusion reached is that more research is needed to look at the needs of general wards and their staff, when looking after specialised patients.

**RELEVANCE:** Supporting general wards to care for renal patients would 'free up' nephrology beds for acute / access patients. Government and professional body changes have led to the expansion of the nurses' role to enhance patient care and support doctors. This could be an ideal situation, expanding and enhancing the nurse's role.